United Nations A/AC.96/SR.710

General Assembly

Distr.: General
18 October 2018
English
Original: French

Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Sixty-ninth session

Summary record of the 710th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 1 October 2018, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Dalil.....(Afghanistan)

Contents

Opening of the session, adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Statement by the High Commissioner

General debate

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of the present record to the Documents Management Section (DMS-DCM@un.org).

Any corrected records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be reissued for technical reasons after the end of the session.

GE.18-16558 (E) 181018 181018

1816558

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Opening of the session, adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters
(A/AC.96/LXIX/1)

1. **The Chair** declared open the sixty-ninth session of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. She said that she wished to welcome all participants, in particular the delegation of Zimbabwe, the newest member of the Executive Committee. The 102 members currently on the Executive Committee provided it with broad geographical representation, which was needed given that the situations faced by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were now more than ever of a global nature and required cohesive responses.

2. During her term as Chair, she had had the opportunity to see the important work that UNHCR was doing together with its committed partners, in particular during her visit to Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, where she had been impressed by the dedication and enthusiasm of UNHCR staff and had witnessed how host communities shared their limited resources with the refugees. She had become convinced that, no matter how serious and large-scale the situation, solutions were always to be found by identifying root causes in a genuine and systematic manner.

3. There were now more than 68 million people around the world who had been forced from their homes because of conflicts, persecution, violence and human rights violations, including an estimated 12.2 million newly displaced persons in the past year alone. Such developments had exacerbated the situation of displaced persons in the world and posed considerable challenges for United Nations humanitarian organizations and their partners. At the same time, new opportunities had emerged, notably in the context of implementing the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and increased cooperation in the humanitarian and development fields, which had increasingly been showing results.

4. Several formal and informal consultations had been conducted during the past year with a wide range of stakeholders to address the shortcomings in the international refugee response, taking into consideration the lessons learned from implementing the comprehensive refugee response framework. The consultation process had led to the development of a global compact on refugees, which aimed at easing pressure on host countries and communities, enhancing refugee self-reliance, expanding access to third country solutions and supporting the necessary conditions for voluntary return in safety and dignity. She encouraged States to keep up the momentum, including by approving the text of the compact at the seventy-third session of the General Assembly.

5. *The agenda was adopted.*

Participants were invited to watch a short film entitled "A time for resolve", which highlighted the need to implement new solutions to enhance refugee self-reliance and provide greater support to host communities and countries.

Statement by the High Commissioner

6. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the state of the world did not look good. Since he had taken office in January 2016, the principles and values of international cooperation had come under immense pressure; internal conflicts had escalated; crises had intensified; governance failures had created space for extremists and criminals; the language of politics had become ruthless; refugees and migrants had become targets; and the number of refugees globally had risen by almost one fifth, going beyond 25 million for the first time ever. Amid so much adversity, multilateralism had nevertheless held its ground, yet it must be reinvigorated. He was proud of what UNHCR had achieved through the immense dedication of its staff and its partners and with the support of members. The New York Declaration, too, was a milestone — a political commitment at the highest level, grounded in international cooperation and refugee protection standards — and the global compact on refugees charted a clear way forward, through a stronger, fairer, better response model.

7. Global forced displacement had climbed, reaching 68.5 million in 2017, including 40 million internally displaced persons. Neighbouring countries had largely kept their borders open, hosting refugees with generosity, despite enormous constraints, yet further afield, often in rich countries, the trend was still towards making it difficult for people to seek asylum, even by closing borders and pushing people away. Children were separated from their parents, asylum seekers were stranded at border fences, or detained indefinitely, and refugees were dehumanized and treated as a commodity. How was he then to tell leaders of neighbouring countries hosting refugees to take more people when some in richer countries were discussing how to close their borders?

8. He wished to review the five core elements of the strategic directions of UNHCR: protect; respond; include; empower; and solve. The work of UNHCR to protect had remained grounded in international principles and standards. However, increasing mixed flows, such as the movement of refugees and migrants from Africa through Libya, had presented very difficult challenges to that work. While Libya itself was a theatre of conflict and international concerns had focused on reducing arrivals in Europe, an increasing number of people were exposed to exploitation and detention, in horrific conditions. The first priority was an all-out effort to bring stability back to Libya. Meanwhile, emergency solutions must be pursued. The agreement reached between the African Union, European Union and the United Nations in Abidjan offered a good framework for that purpose. Close to 1,850 asylum seekers and refugees had now been flown to safety, mostly to the Niger, with the aim of further resettlement, and 15 other countries had offered resettlement places. Nevertheless, insecurity limited the scope of action of UNHCR. With tens of thousands of asylum seekers and refugees in the country, more solutions must be found, and quickly.

9. Preserving asylum in Europe remained equally crucial. Recent events in the Mediterranean Sea had been deeply troubling. More than 1,700 people had died or gone missing while trying to reach Europe's shores since the start of the year. Rescue at sea, a marker of shared humanity, had been taken hostage by politics. Responsibility-sharing had been replaced by responsibility-shedding. Rescue at sea must be restored. Pushing people away could not be the answer. UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) had offered a concrete proposal for a regional disembarkation arrangement, which would complement the much needed reform of the common European asylum system.

10. The outflow of Venezuelans across Latin America and beyond was another example of protection challenges amid complex population flows. With more than 2.6 million people now outside the country, a non-political and humanitarian approach was essential. He welcomed the adoption of the Quito Declaration and commended States in the region for keeping their borders open. He also commended the work that IOM and UNHCR had been carrying out together, including through the establishment of a regional inter-agency coordination platform and the appointment of the Joint Special Representative, Mr. Eduardo Stein.

11. Regarding the second core strategic direction, to respond quickly, reliably and effectively in emergencies, events of the past year in Bangladesh had shown what could be accomplished when the authorities, humanitarian partners, national and international non-governmental organizations and refugees themselves acted collectively. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank must be thanked for their contributions. However, it was the responsibility of Myanmar to find solutions to the crisis, whose root causes, including arbitrary denial of citizenship, must be addressed. The crisis had proved that humanitarian action was crucial to saving lives, but a broader solidarity approach, encompassing bilateral and multilateral development aid and supporting sustainable solutions, was equally needed. In both Myanmar and the Syrian Arab Republic, or elsewhere, refugees had the fundamental right to return home, in safety and dignity, at a time of their choosing, regardless of political circumstances. UNHCR supported all action that contributed to the full exercise of that right. To date, more than 750,000 Syrian internally displaced people were estimated to have returned home in 2018, but refugee returns accounted for less than 1 per cent of refugees in 2017, and would be even lower in 2018. It should not be forgotten that neighbouring countries hosted 5.6 million refugees; donors had been generous, but funding — and resettlement places — were insufficient. Commitments made at recent conferences in London and Brussels must be fully honoured.

12. Cash-based interventions were playing an important role in countries hosting Syrian refugees and elsewhere, with a total value of half a billion dollars. They required not only donor support but also increased cooperation with other organizations such as the World Food Programme.

13. The leadership and expertise of the World Bank had helped trigger a fundamental change in how development entities engaged with large-scale refugee flows and internal displacement. UNHCR had begun to have a deeper understanding of the development challenges posed by displacement and was keen to collaborate on the joint data centre that would soon be established in Copenhagen. The World Bank was paving the way in developing innovative financial instruments that built the resilience of refugees and their hosts, partnering with States and UNHCR to leverage their potential and facilitate refugee inclusion. The regional sub-window for refugees of the International Development Association (IDA) and the Global Concessional Financing Facility were truly trailblazing. Millions of refugees and members of local communities stood to benefit from the resources being made available. Other investments by bilateral development entities and regional and international financial institutions were also growing. Notable examples included the work of the European Commission, Japan, Germany, and the United Kingdom, the African Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Inter-American Development Bank. Some US$ 6.5 billion of development funding had been mobilized in support of refugees and their hosts. It was important to ensure that resources were disbursed rapidly. It should be stressed that those resources must remain additional to humanitarian funding. Humanitarian action, in fact, would remain vital. He was deeply grateful for the strong confidence that UNHCR continued to receive from its donors. Funds available in 2018 were estimated to reach again US$ 4.5 billion. He wished to thank the United States, the European Union and Germany for their particularly strong support and Sweden, the United Kingdom, Norway and the Netherlands for providing critical substantive unearmarked funding. However the gap between requirements and available resources continued to grow and would reach 45 per cent in the current year.

14. He wished to acknowledge the many States which had taken humane and sometimes courageous decisions to review their laws and policies, reinforce refugee rights and expand access to national programmes, labour markets and social protection systems. The private sector was also playing a prominent role, along with faith groups, sport organizations and cities. There had been important progress on financial inclusion for refugees. The comprehensive refugee response framework had provided a vehicle for those efforts in the 15 countries where it had been applied and would grow in significance as an integral part of the global compact on refugees.

15. At the General Assembly during the first days of its seventy-third session, there had been a notable focus on refugee education. Here, there had been progress thanks to the many States that had opened access to their national systems and to innovative initiatives, such as the Global Partnership for Education and the "Education Cannot Wait" fund. Primary school enrolment for refugee children had risen from 50 per cent in 2015 to 61 per cent in 2017. Those figures, however, remained far below the global rate of 92 per cent. One million refugee children had been enrolled in primary education through the "Educate A Child" programme supported by the Education Above All Foundation. In tertiary education, the valuable Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) had almost tripled in size in the last three years, and digital learning platforms, such as the Instant Schools Network, were also playing an increasingly significant role.

16. The final core strategic direction related to the search for solutions, which was at the heart of the comprehensive refugee response framework. The approach based on the search for solutions had inspired its regional application to Somalia displacement by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and in northern Central America through the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework (known by its Spanish acronym "MIRPS"). Such an approach had proved to be adaptable to other protracted situations, including in Nicaragua and Afghanistan, and had already yielded results. He welcomed the recent developments in the Horn of Africa, including dialogue between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and hoped that they would act as a catalyst towards finding solutions to displacement in the region. In South Sudan, the revitalized peace agreement had

reopened the door for some hope. He was encouraged to learn that the President of South Sudan had signed the instrument that would pave the way to accession to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol. However, the drop in available resettlement places was a matter of deep concern. Creative efforts like the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative were welcome in that regard. Efforts to end statelessness must be followed through. In that regard, the recent accession of Haiti to both statelessness conventions was a step forward.

17. It was necessary to adapt to new dynamics in order to implement the strategic directions, first and foremost through flexibility and agility in the field. Measures taken to realign Headquarters functions in support of the field were well under way. UNHCR was about to embark on a decisive new phase, moving towards a truly decentralized model whose main purpose would be to build strong, empowered country offices. A road map to take those decisions forward, including costing, would soon be developed.

18. The activities of UNHCR were guided by a strong commitment to integrity. However, there had been recent instances in which the actions of some colleagues and some partners had fallen short of such values, which had had very harmful consequences for the people UNHCR served and the credibility of its programmes. The organization was firmly committed to tackling all forms of misconduct, and that started with prevention. The Risk Management 2.0 initiative, which had been launched at the sixty-eighth session of the Executive Committee, had been rolled out in six countries in the current year. UNHCR had continued to improve its oversight architecture and had intensified its emphasis on ethical conduct within the organization. As awareness had grown, more allegations had been filed. Tackling sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment, had been a key pillar of the organization's actions, and a senior coordinator was now steering those efforts across UNHCR. Allegations of sexual misconduct were assigned to trained investigators and a helpline had been set up to give victims a voice.

19. Emphasizing the crucial importance of international cooperation, he pointed out that, for too long, refugee-hosting countries had borne the brunt of what was a collective responsibility. The global compact on refugees recognized the efforts of those countries and their invaluable contribution to the common good. Member States were encouraged to fully adhere to it. Granting asylum was one of the most ancient gestures of solidarity, and it was to be hoped that the compact would add fresh impetus to that tradition.

General debate

20. **Mr. Onek** (Uganda), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that developing countries hosted about 85 per cent of the world's refugees, in particular African countries, where the largest refugee population was found. However, the voluntary contributions that the continent received were insufficient and met only 18 per cent of the needs in the region. In 2017, only 48 per cent of the budget had been funded, leaving more than half of the needs without funding. The Group was concerned about the 3 per cent reduction in the budget for Africa that was envisaged, which was contrary to the spirit and objectives of the global compact on refugees, and about the lack of information from UNHCR about the reduction. The chronic underfunding was forcing UNHCR to shift from investment in durable solutions to immediate life-saving activities, which fell short of meeting the minimum requirements for displaced populations.

21. Recalling that the principles of international cooperation and solidarity were at the core of the international protection regime, he stressed that the burden of assisting refugees should not be borne disproportionately by only a few host countries. The international community should make a firmer commitment to increasing funding to respond adequately to the needs of refugees and their host countries, in accordance with the provisions of the global compact on refugees.

22. Nevertheless, the Group welcomed the initiatives that had been taken to close the funding gap, including efforts to broaden the donor base. It also welcomed the recognition in the global compact that development assistance should be additional to existing available assistance and wished to extend its appreciation to the World Bank for the additional assistance extended to a number of host States within the framework of the eighteenth

replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA18) regional sub-window for refugees. The Group would appreciate further information on the amount of funding that had been disbursed to date.

23. It was concerned about reports of an increase in xenophobia towards persons of concern to UNHCR and urged the organization to explore ways of assisting States to address the problem. The Group expressed its grave concern about the reduction of resettlement places. It thus called on countries of resettlement to increase the number of places and encouraged other States to do likewise.

24. **Mr. Stevens** (Observer for the European Union), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its member States, said that the candidate countries aligned themselves with his statement. The European Union was applying the approach outlined in the comprehensive refugee response framework. It had launched multi-annual development actions amounting to more than €250 million in countries that applied the framework and provided more than €700 million in non-humanitarian assistance to the world's major host countries. The European Union Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis and Facility for Refugees in Turkey had mobilized €7.5 billion, with substantial contributions from member States. The European Union was continuing to work for a more equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing among member States; concluding the reform of the common European asylum system thus remained central. Member States were working on establishing a European Union resettlement framework, and ad hoc European Union resettlement programmes had already helped 38,000 of the most vulnerable refugees to find protection in countries of the Union, which had made a further commitment to resettling at least 50,000 people in 2018 and 2019. The European Union and its member States were the largest contributors to the emergency transit mechanism for persons evacuated from Libya to the Niger. Saving lives remained a priority for the European Union and its member States, which continued to be involved in search and rescue operations at sea and were working to ensure that those rescued were disembarked in accordance with international law. In that context, the dismantling of smuggling and trafficking networks was crucial.

25. **Ms. Alfaro Castillo** (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, said that she wished to stress the importance of making equitable burden-sharing the cornerstone of refugee protection policy, in the light of international law and the capacities of each country. The countries of the region respected the principle of non-refoulement and had adopted an open-door policy, in the spirit of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees of 1984. Recognizing that 52 per cent of refugees were children, they are also making considerable efforts to ensure respect for the best interests of the child and his or her right to family reunification, and called on other countries to make that issue a priority.

26. With a view to implementing the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action and contributing to the development of the global compact on refugees, the Latin American and Caribbean States had compiled 100 best practices followed by one or more countries in the region in a document entitled "The 100 points of Brasilia". The 15 countries that had implemented the comprehensive refugee response framework had made significant progress. The same was true of Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama, which had implemented the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework. Those countries were currently preparing a report to take stock of the progress made since the establishment of the Framework and the challenges that lay ahead in 2019.

27. **Mr. She Okitundu** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that the Democratic Republic of the Congo aligned itself with the statement made by the African Group. The Democratic Republic of the Congo now more than ever needed the support of UNHCR, as it was currently hosting 536,271 refugees, including 217,000 from Rwanda, 46,502 from Burundi, 176,654 from the Central African Republic and 93,995 from South Sudan, and approximately 75 per cent of those people lived in rural areas within host communities. In view of the application of the clause on the cessation of refugee status, 200,000 Rwandans had said they intended to remain in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the Government must therefore allow them to live legally in the country. To that end, in accordance with the recommendations made at the third meeting of the Tripartite Commission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and UNHCR, held in Kigali in 2013, the Government had proposed that the fourth meeting of the Commission should be held in

Kinshasa between the end of October and the beginning of November 2018. The Democratic Republic of the Congo called on the international community and UNHCR to assist in achieving durable solutions for those people, including promoting voluntary repatriation. Since the last census in 2014, 37,398 Rwandans had been able to return to their country. Concerned about the plight of the many refugees of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in neighbouring countries, the Government was committed to activating, within a reasonable time, the tripartite mechanism with each of the countries concerned in order to prepare for the repatriation of its nationals under the best possible conditions. Furthermore, the electoral process had begun in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Government had taken all necessary security, financial and logistical measures to ensure that the elections were open to all credible, peaceful and transparent movements.

28. **Mr. Dačić** (Serbia) said that, since 2015, refugees and migrants from Asia and Africa had been travelling through his country to developed European Union countries. There were some 3,400 refugees from the Middle East currently staying in Serbia. The Government of Serbia had made a maximum effort to provide accommodation, food, shoes, clothes, health care and psychological and social support and access to education for all those who stayed in its territory. Serbians were well aware of the problem of displacement, with the process of integration for more than 300,000 refugees and displaced persons from the former Yugoslavia still under way, while 28,000 people were still considered to be in protracted displacement and more than 200,000 people from Kosovo and Metohija had the status of displaced persons. The Serbian people had thus shown considerable humanity towards refugees. With two decades of experience in solving refugee problems, Serbia was currently implementing a regional housing programme in cooperation with the European Commission, UNHCR, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe Development Bank. A simple solution to the refugee problem did not exist, yet the regional housing programme was proof that a solution could be found if there was a will. Serbia was ready to share its experience with protracted displacement and contribute to global efforts in that area.

29. **Mr. Messahel** (Algeria) said that conflicts, wars, poverty, hunger and extreme weather conditions continued to drive tens of millions of people into exile each year. Thus, there had been an exponential rise in the number of persons of concern to UNHCR. Those people often found refuge in neighbouring developing countries that were already facing socioeconomic difficulties and that were being asked to provide, in practice, a high level of protection to refugees, as they were the first countries of asylum. In addition, UNHCR, and more generally the institutions of the United Nations system, were finding it increasingly difficult to mobilize the necessary funds to finance humanitarian action. While addressing the issue of forced displacement it was important to take into account the legitimate concerns raised by host countries. That required a renewed commitment to conflict prevention and resolution in accordance with international law and the Charter and equitable and predictable burden-sharing with regard to the care and protection of refugees and the implementation of durable solutions for them. That entailed addressing the root causes of forced displacement. The finalization of the global compact on refugees was a major step forward in the consolidation of multilateralism and management of forced displacement. That instrument should be implemented with the support of all relevant stakeholders, in a spirit of international solidarity. At the same time, it was necessary to establish a concrete mechanism for sharing responsibilities, beginning with assessing the impact that the presence of refugees had on host countries and communities.

30. Algeria, which had always been a place of refuge, remained committed to its policy of caring for refugees and displaced persons. For more than forty years, it had hosted tens of thousands of Sahrawi refugees to whom it provided assistance and protection. It was also hosting 40,000 Syrian nationals and had set up a mechanism to give them, where possible, access to education, health services, employment and housing. Algeria supported efforts to resolve the conflicts in Western Sahara and the Syrian Arab Republic in order to facilitate the return of refugees to their homes once the situation was sufficiently stable.

31. **Mr. Awad** (Somalia) said that Somalia aligned itself with the statement made by Uganda on behalf of the African Group. His Government wished to thank Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Uganda and Yemen for granting asylum to Somali refugees since the beginning of

the Somali civil war in 1991 and to express its gratitude to donor countries and intergovernmental organizations, in particular UNHCR in Somalia, for their assistance.

32. There were currently 2.6 million internally displaced persons in Somalia and, according to UNHCR, more than 819,000 Somalis were refugees and asylum seekers, and approximately 767,500 Somalis had taken refuge in neighbouring countries. Since the end of 2014, 120,050 Somalis had been voluntarily repatriated to Somalia, most of them from Kenya, but also from Yemen and Libya. As at 31 July 2018, 31,473 refugees and asylum seekers from Yemen had been registered in Somalia. The Somali Government, with the support of UNHCR, was working to register asylum seekers and provide care for those with particular needs.

33. Somalia had developed its national action plan based on the comprehensive refugee response framework, the Nairobi Declaration and the national forum on durable solutions for returnees and displaced persons. The Action Plan, which was aligned existing processes, adhered to the National Development Plan for the period 2017–2019. The Somali Government considered it necessary to review the legal frameworks that would facilitate the achievement of durable solutions in Somalia, including policies relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and legislation on housing, land and property. There was also an urgent need to address the issue of evictions. Thus, at the second Somalia Partnership Forum, held in July 2018 in Brussels, the Government committed itself to adopting national guidelines on evictions in order to deal with the matter fairly and avoid violating the rights of those affected. In that regard, it was important to recall that Somalia had ratified the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.

34. The Government considered an area-based approach to be the best method for resolving the problem of displacement in a holistic and inclusive manner, taking into account refugees, returnees, internally displaced persons and the host population. Such an approach had the advantage of enhancing social cohesion and avoiding conflicts over resources. Nevertheless, finding lasting solutions to the problem of displacement would require significant investment and capacity-building of government institutions. It would therefore require, first and foremost, the support of the donor community.

35. **Mr. Mokuy** (Observer for Equatorial Guinea) said that his country associated itself with the statement made by Uganda on behalf of the African Group. Equatorial Guinea, which was celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its independence in the current year and was a party to regional and international human rights instruments, welcomed the development of a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. It was now more necessary than ever to adhere to the guiding principles of international humanitarian assistance set out in General Assembly resolution 46/182, and international cooperation was essential to ensure the protection of an ever-increasing number of refugees. Given that traditional solutions such as resettlement, voluntary return and integration were no longer sufficient, host countries and countries of origin of refugees must be given resources to build their capacity for protection, assistance and durable solutions in order to fulfil their responsibilities.

36. **Mr. Besson** (Switzerland) said that his Government welcomed the reaffirmation by UNHCR of the central role of protection. In that regard, Switzerland recalled that the technical integrity of UNHCR programmes was essential to its protection mandate and wished to know whether the technical services capable of ensuring the coherence of its action and the quality of its interventions in the areas of water, sanitation and shelter would remain at headquarters and what their role would be in the context of the decentralization of the operations of the Office. In 2018, Switzerland had resettled 82 migrants detained in camps and detention centres in Libya and evacuated by UNHCR through the Niger. Switzerland thanked the Niger for hosting them and encouraged other countries to support the resettlement of people from Libya. It recalled that there were currently nearly 42 million displaced persons and that they should be given greater visibility. In that regard, it supported the implementation of the conclusions of the operational review of the engagement of UNHCR in situations of internal displacement in 2017 and would like to know what measures had been taken by the Standing Committee in 2018. Switzerland was pleased to note that some key elements of the global compact, including the right to seek

asylum, the principle of non-refoulement and respect for humanitarian principles, had been reaffirmed and encouraged all States to adopt the text of the compact and commit to its implementation.

37. **Mr. Cassayre** (United States of America) said that the United States of America remained the largest single donor of humanitarian assistance worldwide. As at late September, in fiscal year 2018, it had provided nearly $1.2 billion in humanitarian assistance for the Syrian crisis, nearly $545 million for the South Sudan regional humanitarian response and nearly $420 million in humanitarian assistance in the Lake Chad Basin region. The United States had also provided more than $95 million in life-saving assistance to Venezuelans who had fled their homes and some $389 million for victims in Rakhine State. In fiscal year 2018, the United States contribution to UNHCR activities amounted to $1.5 billion. Recognizing that cooperation between countries was the best way to assist refugees, the United States commended the efforts of Governments that were applying the comprehensive refugee response framework and countries that had implemented programmes for persons in need of protection, such as Costa Rica, which had developed a framework for protection and solutions for refugees that included access to government-run social welfare programmes and entrepreneurship opportunities. In addition, the United States supported the efforts of donors and humanitarian agencies under the Grand Bargain to improve the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of humanitarian assistance. However, efforts to improve the transparency of reporting and measurement of progress on the Grand Bargain, especially those regarding joint needs assessments that underpinned response plans, were urgently needed.

38. **Mr. Rzayev** (Azerbaijan) said that he regretted that the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants did not pay sufficient attention to the issue of internal migration and considered that international law should be improved to protect the persons concerned. Azerbaijan had been facing the problem of forced migration resulting from the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh for more than 25 years. Armenia refused to implement four Security Council resolutions on the matter and continued to occupy 20 per cent of Azerbaijani territory, thus preventing displaced persons from returning home. The care of such persons was a financial burden for Azerbaijan, which had built 98 housing complexes with more than 270,000 persons. More than one million refugees and forced migrants lived in Azerbaijan and 400,000 of them under very difficult conditions. Azerbaijan was counting on the international community to provide financial support to improve the living conditions of those persons. The legal status and social benefits of those who were in Azerbaijan would continue to be maintained, in accordance with its international obligations, until the conditions for their return were met.

39. **Mr. Mankhwala** (Observer for Malawi) said that Malawi endorsed the statement made on behalf of the African Group. For four decades, Malawi had been hosting refugees, who were allowed to stay until the conditions were safe in their respective countries. At present, almost all of the 2,700 Mozambican refugees in the Luwani Refugee Camp had voluntarily returned home under a tripartite agreement with UNHCR and Mozambique. However, there were more than 42,000 people from Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries who were living in Dzaleka Refugee Camp in the central part of the country. Another 1,500 further refugees had just been registered and 500 to 600 new arrivals were received each month. All refugees enjoyed the same rights and the same protection as Malawian citizens. Malawi was preparing to adopt the comprehensive refugee response framework to enable them to become self-reliant. It continued to implement the comprehensive solutions strategy for Rwandans affected by the refugee status cessation clause and was following up with the persons concerned for whom voluntary repatriation was being encouraged.

40. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he welcomed the efforts made by various countries and their support for the work of UNHCR. He wished to thank the representatives who had given their support to the global compact on refugees, which focused on the inclusion of refugees in host countries throughout their stay. He underlined the importance of the regional approach that had been adopted in the Horn of Africa for Somali refugees not only in order to provide them with protection but also to find solutions to make them self-reliant. He also stressed the importance of carrying

out an analysis of the impact of the presence of refugees in the host regions and recalled that collaboration had been established with the international financial institutions to that end. He shared the concerns of the African Group regarding resources and noted in that regard that the UNHCR budget allocation for Africa would increase slightly in 2019. However, a large part of the funding for Africa came from voluntary contributions and usually arrived quite late in the year. He joined with African countries in calling for those funds to be disbursed sooner. He thanked the United States for confirming its significant financial contribution, which would be crucial to the work of the Office. He also thanked Colombia, which had highlighted regional traditions in hosting refugees, and hoped that it would continue to honour those traditions in the face of the influx of Venezuelan refugees. He recalled that the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which hosted and produced refugees, was complex and that regional solutions must be found. Lastly, he assured the Swiss delegation that programme coherence was an important element in the process of decentralizing UNHCR operations and that it would be maintained.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.